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REPORT OF THE
5TH JPI HDHL CONFERENCE

DIET AS LEVERAGE POINT TOWARDS A HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEM

The Joint Programming Initiative a Healthy Diet for a Healthy Life welcomed about 240 people to its 5th international conference on the 20th of February 2019 in Bozar, Brussels.

The participants represented a wide variety of stakeholders in the area of food, nutrition and health and came together to discuss the state of the art in the field of JPI HDHL and look towards the future.



Morning session

The conference was opened by Martijntje Bakker, chair of JPI HDHL and moderator for the day. After welcoming everyone she introduced the theme of the conference; *Diet as leverage point towards a healthy and sustainable food system*. She explained how the unhealthy lifestyles and related chronic diseases, which are the main focus of JPI HDHL, are interconnected with other societal challenges. In particular the effect of food production and consumption on our environment and vice versa. Discussing healthy diets from a food system perspective is therefore highly important. This was also the topic of the first keynote speech by Line Gordon of the Stockholm Resilience Centre.



Keynote speech

Line Gordon talked about the main results of the much discussed **EAT-Lancet report** that was published in January 2019 and that she co-authored. She addressed the sustainability and health challenges of current food systems and the scale of change needed to achieve futureproof production and consumption.

Her keynote, that also looked at the role of gastronomy in inspiring and driving change, captured the full attention of the audience. One of her take home messages was that diet can be a leverage point to a healthy and sustainable food system, but only if it is combined with actions in other sectors.



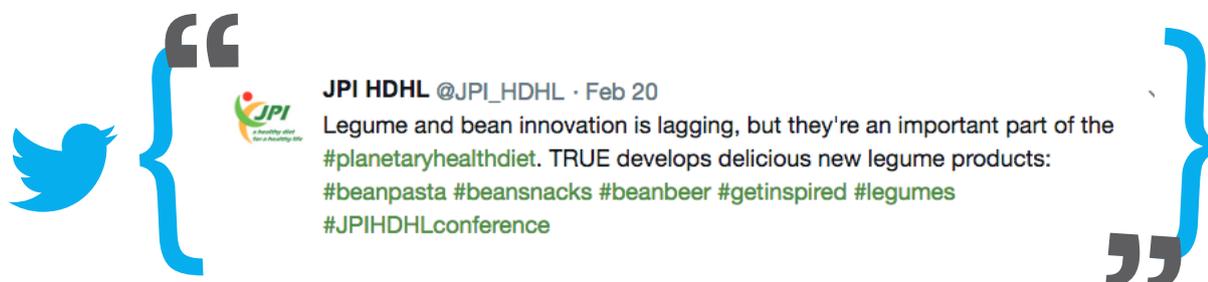
After the panel discussion, we aimed to inspire the audience by having them choose 2 out of 5 short inspiration sessions.



Noelle Aarts talked about the relevance of conversations to solve complex problems around the food system. With inspiring examples and practical guidelines she motivated the audience to get more out of dialogues towards a healthy and sustainable food system.

From the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC), Camille Perrin presented policy and research needs to make healthy and sustainable food choices easier for consumers. She recommended to involve consumers more in research on this topic and to provide consumers with more information about ingredients, nutritional value and the sustainability of products.

Matteo Villa of the Leonardo da Vinci Science Museum coordinates the Milan City Lab, part of the Fit4Food2030 network of City and Policy Labs across Europe. He explained that the science museum is a place where science and society go hand in hand and how this contributes to the work of the City Lab. The City Lab works with local stakeholders on educational modules to build competences that are needed for a futureproof food system.



Participants of the Legume inspiration session given by Marta Vasconcelos and Bálint Balázs learnt about the experiences and results of the TRUE project (TRAnsition paths to sUstainable legume based systems in Europe). The audience was not only inspired by a presentation, but also got to taste various legume products, like the lupin bean, common in Spain, and a cake snack for children with legumes.

Tom Boothe is the co-founder of the participative, cooperative supermarket La Louve in Paris, France. In an interactive setting, he guided the participants through the story of the La Louve supermarket. Based on principles like high quality food products, low environmental impact, not for profit and inclusivity, it has become a great success, enabling members to eat better.



Afternoon session

After lunch, the afternoon programme consisted of the second keynote speech, provided by Helen Roche, and five parallel workshops on various topics that the participants could choose between.



Keynote speech

Helen Roche, professor of nutrigenomics at University College Dublin, started with the presentation of the new edition of the JPI HDHL Strategic Research Agenda, which was developed while she was chair of the JPI HDHL Scientific Advisory Board. The SRA provides a framework for coordinated research activities in the years ahead, both for its 26 member countries and for other actors. In the new version, the traditional research pillars have been replaced with a research area model, facilitating further integration. She continued with a further exploration of the main research challenges and priorities in the field of JPI HDHL, discussing nutrition in the elderly and sarcopenia, gut microbiota and precision nutrition, among other things. The need to align nutrition with sustainability, for example with regards to protein, was also considered. A reflection on how important it is that research results contribute to evidence of efficacy concluded the speech.



Parallel Workshop

1. Monitoring, benchmarking and supporting public and private sector action to increase healthy food environments

Does your project deliver what has been promised? Who are your key stakeholders and are they chosen strategically? Are the ultimate 'end users' of the knowledge that is created involved in the project's journey?

This were some of the questions that were discussed during the workshop "research Impact, Engagement and Adoption" which was moderated by Rhonda Smith from Minerva. JPI HDHL selected the following 4 projects as case studies for this workshop:

MaNuEL: Malnutrition in the Elderly

AMBROSIAC: A Menu for Brain Responses Opposing Stress-induced Alternations in Cognition,

MaPLE: Microbiome Manipulation through Polyphenols for managing gut Leakiness in the Elderly and

ProHealth: Innovative processing to preserve positive health effects in pelagic fish products.

The workshop started with a short presentation of the project results, the impact of the project, the engagement with the main stakeholders. After this session the group discussed the tools, channels, innovations and trends available to researchers and projects to ensure their work delivers the promised impact.

Some key messages of the workshop:

- Project output is not the same as impact!
- Think of the ultimate end-users and formulate a clear message for them
- There should be a plan in place at the beginning of a project for how to engage with your stakeholders

2. Monitoring, benchmarking and supporting public and private sector action to increase healthy food environments

The workshop started with a presentation by Stefanie Vandevijvere with a general overview of the INFORMAS framework and protocols for measuring and benchmarking food environments and policies internationally. A more detailed presentation was conducted for the Healthy Food Environment Policy Index (Food EPI) and the Business Impact Assessment on Obesity and Population Level Nutrition (BIA-Obesity). Both will be used in European projects, including the Policy Evaluation Network (PEN) which is funded by the JPI HDHL.

Janas Harrington is part of PEN and provided more information about this project that had its kick off meeting in the beginning of February 2019. PEN aims to identify, evaluate and benchmark policies designed to directly or indirectly address unhealthy diets, physical inactivity and sedentary behaviour in Europe with a particular focus on accounting for existing health inequalities. João Breda of the WHO gave insight in the policy work of the WHO to promote healthy food and drink environments. He explained the WHO European Food and Nutrition Action Plan 2015 – 2020 and the WHO tools for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases among other things.

3. Designing an educational module for Innovation in the Food System

In this workshop, EIT Food, EFSA, FSAI and JPI HDHL discussed with the participants the knowledge needs that (early career) scientists and other actors may have around the possibilities of working with industry and the role of regulation, and how an educational module can respond to these needs. A better connection between the knowledge needs of scientists, industry and food safety regulation may improve the translation of research results to innovation and deliver more towards the transformation of the food system. EIT, EFSA, FSAI and JPI HDHL started by discussing the current landscape and a number of cases were presented about the uptake of research by industry and the role of regulation. After this, there was a group discussion about which related educational needs the participants saw. It became clear from this that there is generally little attention paid to these topics in academia, and scientists were unsure how they could gain access to this type of information. EIT Food, JPI HDHL and the safety authorities will therefore continue discussions about the development of an appropriate educational module to better connect these fields.

4. Innovative approaches to increase impact of R&I investments: the role of research funders

This workshop organized by FIT4FOOD2030 focused on the role that research funders can play in increasing the impact of the research that they fund. Applying a holistic or systems approach and Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) are ways to make the R&I system more effective. Participants of this workshop discussed their experiences and identified barriers to implementation of RRI in small groups on four different themes: agenda-setting and program design, how to incorporate RRI in programs, monitoring and evaluating and program alignment across sectors.

Some key insights from this workshop on strategies to overcome the identified barriers - which is needed for change - include;

- Establishing multi/transdisciplinary European food research platform
- Identification of best practices from countries with good R&I infrastructure
- Building platforms for sharing results, experiences and narratives
- Fostering public-private collaborations, with a facilitating role for private foundations with public benefits
- Create political will to support overarching cross-sectoral programs
- Building new skills and competences for RRI & innovative funding

5. Exploring knowledge needs around food intolerances and allergies

The workshop started with a presentation by Huub Savelkoul from the Wageningen University about the underlying mechanisms of food intolerances and allergies and outstanding research questions in this field. Afterwards the audience discussed in 4 mixed groups about why more research in this field is needed, the most important topics and knowledge gaps, specific research questions and which stakeholders should be involved. This part of the workshop was done via the online discussion method “Group Decision Room”, and was moderated by Edith Feskens.

The groups came up with about 20 topics in this field that need more attention. With sticky notes the participants could prioritise the most important topics, which resulted in the following top 3:

1. the overlap between non-communicable diseases and allergies where chronic inflammation seems to be a common factor
2. the role of food processing in triggering or alleviating allergen production
3. accurate, reliable diagnostic tests that are not too expensive

Besides the scientific field, policy makers and food industry, the audience indicated that the educational community, farmers, breeding companies, consumers and NGOs are important stakeholders to involve in the battle against food allergies and intolerances. The input of the participants will be taken into account in future JPI HDHL research activities on this topic.



Closing session

Martijntje Bakker closed the conference with a last question via Mentimeter: what do you take home from the conference? Participants indicated that, besides their suitcase, they took away inspiration, good energy, the art of a dialogue, the strength to carry-on, collaboration, education, the need for a holistic approach and more information about the JPI HDHL. All participants were thanked for their active role in the discussions and Martijntje Bakker emphasized the necessity to take action in all parts of the food system right now. With the closing remarks in mind, everyone headed to the goodbye drinks to continue the lively discussions about diet, health and the food system.



JPI HDHL Science Vlog Contest

As part of the JPI HDHL conference, a science vlog (video log) contest for early career scientists was organised. Broad and understandable communication of research projects in order to have an impact on society is essential for excellent science and the JPI HDHL science vlog contest contributes to this. From 14 running projects funded by JPI HDHL, we received a vlog made by one or more early career scientists.

For most early career scientists who participated, this was the first vlog they made. Nevertheless, the results were of high quality and very creative. Together with EUFIC and DG Santé, both member organisations of our Stakeholder Advisory Board, the JPI HDHL reviewed the 14 vlogs that were made and selected the best 3:

- **BioFN** (*Biomarkers for Infant Fat Mass Development and Nutrition*)

- **FiberTAG** (*TAGging dietary Fiber intake and their interest for health by measuring biomarkers related to the gut microbiota*)
- **GUTMOM** (*Maternal obesity and cognitive dysfunction in the offspring: cause-effect role of the GUT MicrobiOMe and early dietary prevention*)

These vlogs were shown during the plenary session of the JPI HDHL conference. Afterwards the audience voted for the vlog that they thought was the best. They were asked to take into account innovation, creativity, clear science communication and the explanation of the societal impact of the project. The vlog of GUTMOM from Lea Brix presented a clear, accessible and entertaining explanation of science for a broad audience and won the contest. All vlogs can be viewed on the **JPI HDHL YouTube channel**.